Dear Welcomer,

The need for collective action to support refugee students could not be greater. Forced displacement throughout the world has doubled in the past decade, and among the displaced are thousands of university-aged refugees dreaming about continuing their education. While 40% of students access higher education worldwide, only 6% of refugee students have access to higher education.

Despite the growing interest in the intersection between higher education and displacement, a structured and sustainable pathway for refugee students through higher education did not exist in the United States—until now.

We are excited to share a groundbreaking opportunity for your campus to sponsor refugee students through the Welcome Corps, a new U.S. government service opportunity launched by the U.S. Department of State earlier this year. The Welcome Corps empowers everyday Americans to come together to privately sponsor refugees, building on our country’s long tradition of providing refuge to those fleeing persecution. The Welcome Corps on Campus program leverages the capacity of U.S. higher education institutions to serve as a safe haven, provide academic opportunities for refugee students, foster more diverse and inclusive campuses, and create a sustainable opportunity for colleges and universities to welcome refugee students on their campuses. With the support of institutional leadership, campus private sponsor groups, consisting of staff, faculty, students, and members of the surrounding community will welcome refugee students at their institutions to provide them with a softer landing, an educational pathway, and a supportive community that helps set them up for academic and overall success.

By committing to enroll one to three refugee students, your campus can be part of this historic moment in U.S. resettlement and higher education. The Welcome Corps on Campus is the first and only education pathway for refugee students that leads to permanent residency in the United States while enabling refugees to obtain a higher education degree. This is the moment for the United States to embark on the essential next step in expanding refugee access to higher education. In this toolkit you will find the information and tools you need to bring the Welcome Corps on Campus to your institution. With your help, we can empower refugee students by providing them with the life-changing opportunity to resettle and study in the United States and become active members in our communities!

Please review the mobilization toolkit and contact campus@welcomecorps.org to meet with a Welcome Corps on Campus team member about this new opportunity.
Welcome Corps on Campus Overview

Colleges and universities have a rich legacy of welcoming refugees, embracing the diversity of perspectives and backgrounds that newcomers bring to America. Campuses across the United States have implemented innovative programs and practices to aid refugees and other vulnerable communities as they access higher education, achieve degree completion, prepare to enter the workforce, and find long-term success.

Despite the growing interest in the intersection between higher education and displacement, a structured and sustainable pathway for refugee students to access higher education in the United States did not exist—until now. The Welcome Corps on Campus makes it possible for campus communities to welcome, enroll, and support refugee students, creating new opportunities for higher education institutions and their communities to leverage campus ecosystems and resources for private sponsorship.

About the Consortium

The Welcome Corps on Campus was launched in July 2023 by the U.S. Department of State to allow institutions and their stakeholders to welcome and enroll refugee students on their campuses.

The Department of State is funding a consortium of nonprofit organizations, led by the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH), to implement private sponsorship of refugee students at U.S. campuses under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), in alignment with the goals of the Welcome Corps.

Consortium members include:

- **Community Sponsorship Hub** – responsible for sponsor vetting and certification, program oversight and coordination;
- **Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR)** – responsible for campus sponsor training and ongoing sponsor support;
- **The Institute of International Education (IIE)** – responsible for coordinating academic placements of refugee students;
- **The National Association of Systems Heads (NASH) and the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education & Immigration (Presidents’ Alliance)** – responsible for mobilizing campuses to participate in the Welcome Corps on Campus;
- **The World University Service of Canada (WUSC)** – responsible for refugee student identification overseas.
5 Steps to Engage & Mobilize Your Campus

Colleges and universities across America are uniquely positioned to welcome refugee students at their campuses. Campus ecosystems provide access to education and important wrap-around services such as housing, health services, dining halls, and additional social and academic supports that ensure the best possible welcome for refugee students. Mapping, connecting, educating, and mobilizing this ecosystem is key to sponsoring and welcoming refugee students on your campus. These five steps outline the process from engaging and mobilizing your campus to submitting an application to sponsor one or several refugee students at your institution.

1. **Consider Key Questions & Identify Stakeholders**

   The key to the Welcome Corps on Campus’ approach is cross-campus “buy-in” from a diverse set of stakeholders across campus who understand and support the program. Your first step is to reflect on your campus community and identify the possible champions and stakeholders you want to engage.

2. **Conduct Outreach & Raise Awareness**

   Once you have a clear understanding of your campus and the possible stakeholders, you can start to plan your outreach. This toolkit will help you be intentional about the messaging you use to engage your audience. Building awareness and educating diverse stakeholders on campus will be an essential part of your mobilization strategy.

3. **Form a Campus Private Sponsor Group**

   As part of the Welcome Corps on Campus, each campus is required to form a private sponsor group, a group of at least five individuals who over the age of 18, who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents, and who are connected to the campus. It is recommended that sponsor groups consist of students, faculty, and staff to provide sponsored refugee students with core sponsorship services.

4. **Secure Funding & Commitments**

   Assess what resources your campus community already has and what supports you need to secure to welcome refugee students on campus. Explore possible sources of funding and support.

5. **Apply!**

   Once your campus is ready to apply, follow these steps to make sure you have all the necessary materials and paperwork ready to complete and submit your application.
1 Consider Key Questions & Identify Stakeholders

**Key Questions**

The following questions are intended to gauge the type of stakeholders you may need to engage at various points in the process of mobilizing your campus to participate in the Welcome Corps on Campus.

1. **What are some of the existing programs, initiatives, champions, and structures on your campus that can be leveraged to support the Welcome Corps on Campus?**

   Think about your campus’ past relationship and experience serving refugee, displaced, or traditionally underrepresented students: Who was involved? How does the Welcome Corps on Campus align with your institutional mission? How does your campus structure impact the Welcome Corps on Campus program (e.g., public or private, centralized or decentralized, a largely residential or commuter campus, diverse student body, etc.)?

2. **Who on your campus is authorized to sign the letter of commitment required to submit a sponsor application?**

   As part of their application, every campus Private Sponsor Group will be required to submit a letter of commitment confirming the support of their institution’s leadership and administration. This will likely be a high-level decision maker on campus who has the power to make financial, programmatic, admissions, and/or other executive decisions, such as presidents, provosts, or boards of trustees.

3. **What departments and/or offices do you need on board before applying to participate in the Welcome Corps on Campus?**

   These will likely be departments/offices that will directly support the implementation of the program on your campus, such as admissions offices, international students offices, financial aid, or academic advising offices.

4. **Which campus stakeholders must support the program to ensure a sustainable and all-of-campus approach?**

   This could include any stakeholders who could help build the program infrastructure on campus even if it is not their direct responsibility (e.g., faculty, student associations, or dining services) or join your sponsor group.
Consider Key Questions & Identify Stakeholders

Map Stakeholder Relationships

Now that you have identified stakeholders, and reflected on the required campus buy-in to build a successful program infrastructure on your campus, it will be important to map which stakeholders — both on- and off-campus — to conduct outreach in order to bring the Welcome Corps on Campus to your institution. The goal is to create an ecosystem of actors on each campus, made up primarily of four general categories: campus administrators, faculty, staff, students, and off-campus community members.

Identify and list out the stakeholders in each of the following categories that you will reach out to about the Welcome Corps on Campus. Each of these categories of actors will be crucial to the success of the program and will be engaged differently in each step of the process. What all categories have in common is that all have the potential to be champions on your campus to welcome and integrate refugee students on your campus.

1. **Executive level** — These may be presidents, provosts, chancellors, deans, and other high-level administrators. Think about who could commit to enrolling at least one student and provide support with tuition and/or housing costs.

2. **Faculty** — Any professors or academic departments interested in this topic. Think about who might be interested in joining your campus sponsor group, providing academic advising support, supporting coordination amongst group members, or advocating and educating other members of the campus community on the program.

3. **Staff** — Source a list of staff members from offices relevant to this program such as inclusion, housing, dining, international services, etc. Review the core sponsorship services and think about the logistical/administrative support a refugee student will need, who might be best placed to offer this type of support, and who might be interested in joining your sponsor group.

4. **Students** — Student associations, affinity groups, clubs, leaders, or any other interested individuals. Think about who might be interested in joining your sponsor group to welcome and integrate the refugee students on campus and serve as a peer mentor.

5. **Off-campus community members** — e.g., local faith-based communities, businesses, diaspora groups, and community organizations. Think about who might serve as a partner and supporter, providing financial and in-kind support such as household items and connecting students to opportunities such as internships.

6. **Potential funders** — Foundations, high-net-worth individuals, alumni, etc. in your network. Think about who might be able and interested in providing funding to support the refugee student’s academic and living expenses such as tuition, housing, daily living expenses, etc.
2 Conduct Outreach & Raise Awareness

Plan Your Outreach

Once you have a clear understanding of your campus and the stakeholders who are critical for the success of the Welcome Corps on Campus at your institution, you can start to plan your outreach to secure institutional and community support and recruit Private Sponsor Group members.

- Before each meeting or engagement event, identify your objectives and the key points you would like your audience to take away from the meeting or event.
  - For example, “the audience will better understand the mission and process for launching the Welcome Corps on Campus and how they can support the program,” or, “the person I am meeting with will be interested in joining our Private Sponsor Group.”

- Prioritize engagement opportunities that will have the greatest impact and support your objectives, consider who and how many stakeholders you would like to reach and prioritize outreach that will help you achieve those goals.

- Conduct program introduction sessions with key campus stakeholders (individually or as a group, depending on stakeholders).

- Create frequent and diverse touchpoints - for the program to be successful, it will require diverse input and support. For example, if you are not receiving responses from emails, try a different communication approach.

- Leverage the key messaging and marketing collateral frequently in communicating with stakeholders and the community and adjust messaging as necessary.

- Frequently update key stakeholders on progress of the initiative and engage the broader community when appropriate.

Messaging

Be intentional about identifying the messaging you will use to engage your target audience. The language and framing you use will differ based on who you are talking to and what the purpose of your conversation is. If you are speaking to a values-driven or religious organization, you may want to speak to how the program aligns with the organization’s mission of “serving the world.” If your campus’ surrounding community is experiencing a labor shortage and you are speaking with local business owners, you could speak to how welcoming refugees enhances our workforce and boosts local economies.

- Be Accessible: Keep language and terminology accessible to unfamiliar audiences. Rely on glossaries of terms to promote understanding.

- Be Succinct: Keep language in initial marketing and education/awareness materials succinct and provide locations for where more in-depth materials will live.

- Be Honest: Be up front about the costs and challenges for institutions and the need to provide ongoing support, not just access, to students.

WelcomeCorps.org/Campus
Conduct Outreach & Raise Awareness

Messaging

See these example messages, and choose which might be the most compelling for each of your audiences, and come up with your own messaging based on your local context:

The Welcome Corps on Campus is:

- **Possible:** Campuses are supported by the program through access to tools and resources and private sponsors receive ongoing guidance and support. Each campus has an ecosystem that is uniquely placed to welcome refugee students and can be leveraged to support the resettlement of refugee students through a higher education program.

- **Innovative:** This is a new leadership opportunity for universities and colleges to be on the ground floor of federal policy, program and research while expanding opportunities to campus communities to provide life-changing opportunities to refugee students.

- **Sustainable:** This is our opportunity to create a long-term, sustainable pathway for hosting refugees on campuses, not just responding to immediate crises.

- **Mission- & values-aligned:** Private sponsorship of refugee students upholds and advances the core mission and values of higher education and many institutions across the United States.

- **Morally Imperative:** Private sponsorship programs like the Welcome Corps on Campus call on Americans to continue the U.S. tradition of providing safety to persecuted groups and individuals.

- **A Workforce Multiplier:** Enabling refugee students to complete their education in the United States helps communities meet their skilled workforce needs and contribute to local economies.

- **A Talent Driver:** Refugee students add talent, experiences, diversity, and perspectives to campuses and surrounding communities, ultimately attracting even more talent.

- **Timely:** The immense scope of the global displaced crisis is coupled with the urgent need to provide education opportunities for refugee students.

- **Transformative:** The Welcome Corps on Campus is the first and only education pathway in the United States that provides refugee students with a path to permanent residency and a higher education degree. Diversify enrollment and enrich your classrooms with unique international perspectives.

- **Engaging:** Opportunities to bring the campus together in a meaningful way, to connect with the local community, and to share your commitment with alumni and invite them to support your institution as a leader in building welcoming campuses.
2 Conduct Outreach & Raise Awareness

Spread the word!

Building awareness and educating stakeholders on campus will be an essential part of your mobilization strategy. Here are some tools for building awareness and educating stakeholders on the Welcome Corps on Campus:

- Share a short letter or email with an overview of the program, ending with a concrete “ask” to make of the reader.

- Host an informational session, movie screening, or forum discussion on the Welcome Corps on Campus and invite the stakeholders you intend to reach. From formal events such as town halls to informal meetings such as campus club discussions, leverage the existing venues and energies at your institution to help spread awareness and participation.

- Schedule individual or group meetings with stakeholders on campus to discuss the Welcome Corps on Campus and in which capacity they can support the program.

- Invite stakeholders to attend events hosted by the Welcome Corps on Campus, including an upcoming information session.

- Use social media to share content about the Welcome Corps on Campus, including “educational content” explaining the goals and purpose of the program, and “mobilizing content” to coordinate actors to advance the program.

- Empower refugee students’ voices. The real stories and voices of refugee students are the most powerful and effective messengers. If refugee students at your institution or in your community are comfortable sharing their story, help amplify their voices.
Form a Campus Private Sponsor Group

Campuses interested in sponsoring refugee students through the Welcome Corps on Campus must form a campus private sponsor group. Sponsor groups must be made up of at least five Americans who are citizens or lawful permanent residents, who over the age of 18 and who live in or near the community where the refugee student will reside. Group members must be affiliated with the campus where the refugee student will be resettled. It is recommended that sponsor group consist of students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community members to provide sponsored refugee students with a softer landing, a welcoming community, and the necessary academic, logistical, and peer-to-peer support. This may be similar to a working group or committee or task force you have for other cohort programs on your campus. Sponsor groups, in coordination with their institutional leadership, commit to securing full financial, academic, and integration support to sponsored refugee students for a minimum of 12 months. Collectively, sponsor groups and the institution’s leadership must demonstrate that they have the capacity to welcome, enroll, and support refugee students on their campus during the official sponsorship period. View the full list of core sponsorship services here.

Below is a sample list of individuals at your campus who might be interested in joining your campus sponsor group and see here for a sample group structure and roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Office</td>
<td>Academic Advisor</td>
<td>Students in political science, social work, public health, nursing, international relations, gender studies, modern languages, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Services (ISS)</td>
<td>Refugee Studies</td>
<td>Members of student clubs and associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Gen Students</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Peer Mentor or Resident Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>Women’s Studies</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence Hall Coordinator (Res Life)</td>
<td>Honors Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Engagement (student activities)</td>
<td>Faculty or staff in international education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Being a sponsor is a rewarding experience but also requires time. When reaching out to potential group members, make sure to ask in which capacity they can support your group and how much time they can devote to supporting your group per week. Consider that after the refugee(s) you are welcoming arrive, it is essential for some members of your group to have significant time available to help with critical needs and basic necessities such as the health screening, coordinating appointments for IDs and required documentation, and providing other core private sponsorship services. These are questions you will be asked as part of the application process.
3 Form a Campus Private Sponsor Group

Campus private sponsor groups who sponsor refugee students at their campuses will have access to ongoing technical support and training by the Welcome Corps on Campus team prior to and throughout the sponsorship period, including two required 1.5-hour virtual trainings prior to student arrival. These trainings will ensure groups are set-up and prepared to successfully welcome, enroll, and support sponsored students at their institutions. Trainings are delivered live by the program team. The Welcome Corps on Campus will also offer ongoing support through regular check-ins with sponsor groups, monitoring, and a Community of Practice where group members and other relevant stakeholders from participating institutions can meet to exchange experiences, lessons learned, and challenges, and learn more about relevant topics to support them in their sponsor journey.
4 Secure Funding & Commitments

Start to outline the financial and other commitments you will need to welcome refugee students on your campus through Welcome Corps on Campus. Here are some possible sources:

- Scholarships or Tuition waivers - Consult with the Financial Aid and other relevant offices to see what your college or university is willing to offer for refugee students.

- Housing & Meal Plans - Consult with your campus administration if they can sponsor free on-campus housing and/or a meal plan.

- Federal Financial Aid - As refugees, the students are considered eligible non-citizens and therefore can apply after they arrive and be awarded retroactively.

- In-State Tuition - Depending on the state, refugees may be eligible for in-state tuition or a waiver. Check the Higher Ed Immigration Portal Map In-state Tuition and Refugee Advocacy Lab tracker of in-state tuition.

- Local foundations may be willing to support refugee students or wrap around costs.

- Alumni & diaspora communities have stepped up to help support tuition and other needs for refugee students.

- Community Contributions - The community (on & off campus) may be a source of financial and in-kind contributions.

- Fundraising Events – Fundraise across your campus and community by organizing special events, online fundraising campaigns, etc.

View our Fundraising Tips for more ideas on how you can raise funds.
Apply!

Once your campus is ready to apply, your campus private sponsor group, in coordination with institutional leadership, will need to prepare and submit your application.

- Attend an information session.
  - July 19
  - July 26
  - August 9
  - August 23

- Complete the Welcome Corps on Campus sponsor training. Available mid-August.

- Attend an application support session. Available mid-August.

- Complete background checks.

- Complete your Welcome Plan, including budget and post-sponsorship plan. Available mid-August.

- Fill out the academic placement information sheet.

- Sign College or University Letter of Commitment.

- Sign the Campus Private Sponsor Group Commitment Form.


Sign up for the Welcome Corps on Campus newsletter to receive updates and announcements as more resources and information on application timelines, processes and resources become available this fall.
Terms and Acronyms

**Community Sponsorship:** Groups of individuals, such as local clubs, businesses, university communities or faith groups, who commit to providing clearly defined financial and/or in-kind contributions and volunteer services to support refugee welcome and integration.

**Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):** Accredited, degree-granting public or private colleges and universities in the United States providing postsecondary programs and degrees (e.g., doctorate, master's, baccalaureate, associates, Tribal, and special focus institutions).

**Private Sponsorship:** A form of community sponsorship in which private entities or organizations like universities and colleges lead in, and provide financial and logistical support for, the welcome and integration of refugee newcomers.

**Private Sponsor Group:** A group of at least five individual American citizens or lawful permanent residents that is certified by the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH) to provide core private sponsorship services to a refugee case through the Welcome Corps. Each group member must meet minimum requirements and pass a background check to qualify for the Welcome Corps on Campus.

**Refugee:** According to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, a refugee is an individual “who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” (UNHCR)

**Resettlement:** According to UNHCR, “resettlement is the careful selection by governments for purposes of lawful admission of the most vulnerable refugees who can neither return to their home country nor live in safety in neighboring host countries.” The U.S. has a strict resettlement process to screen refugees that can take up to two years (learn more here). According to Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), individuals who meet the definition of a refugee “may be considered for either refugee status under Section 207 of the INA if they are outside the United States, or asylum status under Section 208 of the INA, if they are already in the United States.” (U.S. Department of State)

**Resettlement Agency:** For more than 40 years, the Department of State has partnered primarily with non-profit resettlement agencies to provide initial resettlement assistance to newly arriving refugees. In the traditional resettlement program (not private sponsorship), resettlement agencies are responsible for placing refugees with one of their local affiliates and for providing initial services for refugees resettled in the United States. The Department of State’s standard cooperative agreement with each resettlement agency specifies the services the agency must provide.

**Welcome Corps:** The Welcome Corps is a new service opportunity for Americans to welcome refugees seeking freedom and safety and, in turn, make a difference in their own communities. Together, sponsor groups welcome refugee newcomers by securing and preparing initial housing, greeting refugee newcomers at the airport, enrolling children in school, and helping adults to find employment.

[WelcomeCorps.org/Campus](http://WelcomeCorps.org/Campus)
Background on Refugee Resettlement and Higher Education

Refugee resettlement aims to provide long-term solutions for individuals who have been forced to flee their homes due to violence and persecution. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) coordinates resettlement in cooperation with national governments, with the United States being one of the leading countries of resettlement. However, with over 108.3 million people displaced globally, and around 35.3 million of those displaced holding legal refugee status, less than 1 percent of refugees are resettled each year.\(^1\)

Individuals with refugee status also have significantly lower rates of higher education access than those without refugee status. The UNHCR reports that only approximately 6 percent of refugees have access to tertiary education, compared to approximately 40 percent of the global population.\(^3\) In 2019, the United Nations established a goal to increase refugee access to higher education to 15 percent by 2030: the 15by30 goal.\(^4\)

In the spirit of this goal, access to higher education in the United States can offer refugees security, belonging, and a launchpad for a new start in the U.S. College and university campuses in the United States are ideal sites for newly arrived refugees, offering welcoming communities and integration services such as on-campus housing, health services, and educational opportunities for professional advancement.

In January 2023, the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) announced the creation of Welcome Corps, a program to privately sponsor refugees’ resettling to the United States.\(^5\) Now with the support of higher education institutions and their communities, resettlement experts, and supporters across these issues, the Welcome Corps on Campus marks for the first time in U.S. history that the federal government is institutionalizing sustainable programs to welcome refugee students on campuses—providing both resettlement and higher education pathways at once. With the Welcome Corps on Campus, private campus sponsors can now support refugee students on their way to academic, social, professional, and economic success in the United States.

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2 Ibid.